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ABSTRACT

The paper examines research on social skills instruction for learning disabled young adults. It is suggested that learning disabled young adults must develop methods of analyzing their social inadequacies. Such analyses may come from the young adults, when they are able to apply metacognition skills to social situations. Parents, teachers, and/or counselors may also assist in the analyses through the administration of published assessment instruments and self-analyses. Self-assessment scales are reviewed, and a set of modified checklists is proposed for the individual and the parents. The value of self-monitoring is stressed. A model for developing social skills at the late middle school and secondary level is described which incorporates efforts of students, parents, teachers and others in developing skills for surviving in the non-academic setting. (CL)

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Identifying Metacognitive Social Skills in Young Adults

Linda M. Clary

As the learning disabled children of the past twenty years have grown up, their needs have changed. Attention was originally focused on the instructional and academic areas, first at the elementary level and then in secondary schools. Those young people, however, who received help in school now need some of the same kinds of assistance as they seek to become independent, productive members of society who support themselves and function with a minimum of help in jobs and other social situations. Since the need is crucial for interpersonal skills in addition to academic skills, attention now must shift to these important areas. This attention must clearly define the social needs and characteristics of the LD young adult, provide means of assessing social skills especially through self-monitoring, and suggest ways that the young person may be helped.

The needs of the LD young person seem to be clearly substantiated. Welch (1983) reports that the ACLD Vocational Committee surveyed 562 individuals. Of that number, 154 expressed a specific need for help with social skills. The entire survey showed social relationships and skills to be a primary problem.

Zigmond (cited in Welch, 1983) has suggested four sound reasons that increased awareness must be given to the interpersonal skills of LD young adults. He notes that these youngsters have limited rewards in academic skills and will need to compensate in other ways. Further, better social skills allow for greater profit from educational experiences, assist in achieving success in mainstream settings and increase the student's likelihood of employment. Being

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self-aware of social problems helps tremendously. Certainly, without social skills, the adult's survival in non-academic settings is limited at best, for, according to Johnson and Myklebust (1967), the learning disabled person "does not comprehend his social world to the extent that he can do so." (p. 295). Obviously, the need for social skills is great, particularly when the need is compared to the social characteristics of LD young people.

Alley and Deshler (1979) have surveyed the professional literature and compiled a list of terms used to describe LD students. These include the following social areas: gullibility, aloneness, perseveration, supersensitivity to external cues, suggestibility, emotional lability, poor concentration, overreaction to stimuli, demanding with other persons, poor social judgement, lack of awareness of social impact on others, poor attention and lack of resourcefulness.

Osman and Blinder (1982) have suggested that LD youngsters have many personality traits that make them difficult to deal with even in the home. These traits often start in infancy and continue through life. Often, youngsters are irritable, impulsive, volatile, demanding, and domineering. They lack judgment and social experience. Sometimes, however, they are the opposite and become too quiet and withdrawn.

Kronick (1984) has found that LD persons whose difficulties continue to be manifested in adulthood have several commonalities. In addition to being inefficient at monitoring their social behavior and judging their acceptability, they are immature, egocentric, impulsive, insensitive, irresponsible, rigid in their thinking, disorganized in planning and poor at problem solving. They also have difficulty determining whether or not they have the capabilities to be successful in specific situations which often results in setting goals that are too high or too low. They tend to bounce from highs to lows with little social

and vocational productivity.

Eisler's (1976) list of behavioral situations that are important to children, also points out those areas that young people may need to assess and develop. These include expressing individual opinions, asking favors, beginning conversations, refusing unreasonable requests, inviting someone to play, giving and receiving compliments, asking for help and resisting peer pressure for unacceptable behavior.

While discussing these characteristics, it is also important to remember that the LD adolescent and young adult is much more capable of analysing his behavior and dealing with abstract learning than the younger child was. Some of this age group will have entered Piaget's formal operational period which makes it possible for them to think about thought and escape the concrete (Wiens, 1983). They can monitor their behavior through their metacognitive skills if these skills are developed.

Brown (cited in Wiens, 1983) suggests that metacognition is closely allied with social cognition. Many of the social characteristics of the LD young adult,"such as fear of failure, need for achievement, external vs. internal control, learned helplessness and level of aspiration," (p. 145) are related to metacognitive development. However, the youngster must be taught to use his metacognitive skills. They do not just develop naturally in many individuals, especially the learning disabled.

Given these needs and characteristics, the LD person must develop methods of analysing his social inadequacies in order to learn to live with them and compensate for them. Such analysis may come from the young adult himself, when he is able to apply metacognitive skills to social situations. His parents and/or counselors and teachers may also help. Thorough assessment will probably be accomplished through published tests and self-analysis. This analysis may

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have to be a combination of measures and will need to cover everything from eye contact to attending skills to language and dress to coping strategies.

The assessment of social competence may be measured by published instruments such as the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale and the Tennessee Self Concept Scale . While these tests do not offer scores as specific as achievement or intelligence tests, they provide some information on self-evaluation.

The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale by Ellen Piers and Dale Harris (1969) is a questionnaire designed to measure feelings about self, school and behavior. The SCALE consists of 80 short sentences that can be read aloud by the person or be read aloud by the examiner. Questions are answered by yes or no. Some examples include the following:

It is hard for me to make friends.

I give up too easily.

I worry alot.

I am good looking.

Norms, based on 1183 young people have been established that indicate how closely the individuals reponses correlate to normal responses for young people in grades 4 to 12.

Of the same format but more complex is the Tennessee Self Concept Scale designed by W.H. Fitts (1964) about twenty years ago. This is also a self-evaluation inventory that requires the respondent to make one of five responses. There are 100 items designed to have the individual rate him/herself in the areas of family, moral-ethical, personal, physical, self-criticism and social perceptions. Obviously, this broad variety of items leads to varied information in several types of social settings that are important to the young adult.

The instrument is marked on a scale of 1 to 5 ranging from completely false (1) to completely true (5). Items, such as the following, are included:

I have a lot of self-control.

I am just as nice as I should be.

I try to be careful about my appearance.

I solve my problems quite easily.

According to Cartledge and ~~Wilkerson~~ Milburn (1980), there are several other instruments that may be used. These, as their titles indicate, are intended for children but might be used with the adolescent and young adults in some situations. They include, in the self-report format, the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale by Casteneda, McCandless, and Palermo, the General Anxiety Scale for Children and Test Anxiety Scale for Children by Sarason and associates and the Children's Assertiveness Behavior Scale by Wood and Michelson. Cognitive problem-solving skills can be assessed through open-ended responses by using the Problem Solving Test (PIPS), What Happens Next Games (WHNG) and Means End Problem Solving Test (MEPS), all by Spivack and Shure. (See Cartledge and Milburn, 1980 for specific references.)

A new test, published in 1983, can be used by teachers as they observe and rate individuals in group situations. This instrument is named the ACCEPTS Placement Test (Walker et al , 1983) and is a part of The Walker Social Skills Curriculum . This test is divided into the five areas of classroom skills, basic interaction skills, getting along skills, making friends skills, and coping skills. Rather than self-assessment, this test requires that an observer rate the young person in a social setting where he/she is seen often. Some exemplary items, to be marked on a scale of 1-5 representing not descriptive or true (1), moderately descriptive or true (3), and very descriptive or true (5), are noted below:

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The student produces work of acceptable quality.

The student keeps a conversation going.

The student takes initiative to assist others when they need help.

When things are not going well, the student tries another way.

Even though this rating sheet is intended for teachers, it certainly could be used by counselors, parents, and prospective employers.

This author has modified the Accepts Placement Test and combined it with social skills suggested by Cartledge and Milburn (1980) to make a set of checklists that might be used by the individual and/or parents, with the ACCEPTS Test used by teachers. These modifications change the format of responses slightly. Each checklist consists of twenty-five items and could be easily and quickly completed. The individual's checklist could be read to the young person if a reading disability exists.

Insert Figure 1 about here

After completing this self-analysis, the individual can turn his sheet to the side and connect his answers with a line. The closer the line remains to the heavy black line on the right, the better. Any responses marked in the bottom two lines nearest the asterisks need work first, while responses in the middle column would come next. This method of marking should make it easier for the individual to apply his metacognitive skills and self-analyse his strengths and weaknesses. Some young people might be able to work on this analysis alone, while others would need the help of an adult or peer.

Parents, of course, observe their young adult children under different circumstances than a teacher does. Their insight and observations of similar types of variables, however, can be very helpful in assessing how the youngster

Figure 1. Individual Checklist

	Never	Not Usually	Some-time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. I can sit still for at least 30 minutes.					
2. I can pay attention to a speaker for at least 30 minutes.					
3. I can do what an employer or teacher tells me to do.					
4. I can give instructions to other people.					
5. My work is usually what my employer or teacher wants.					
6. I look at people's eyes when I talk to them.					
7. My voice is louder than others.					
8. I can introduce myself to others.					
9. I start conversations with others when I meet them.					
10. I talk and listen about the same amount of time in a conversation.					
11. I remember to say "thank-you", "please", "excuse me", "good bye" when necessary.					
12. I can and do apologize when I need to.					
13. I remember to ask permission when needed.					
14. I will let others borrow things like a pencil or a book, but I do not lend large amounts of money or very important things like my car.					

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	Never	Not Usually	Some-time	Most of the Time	All of the time
15. I remember to shake hands, but I do not hold on to people all the time.					
16. I keep my body and clothes clean and neat.					
17. I smile when I like something or someone.					
18. If I like something, I tell the person.					
19. I remember to talk nicely even when I am angry.					
20. I know when to stand up for myself or when it's better to walk away when someone tries to make me fight or teases me.					
21. I say "no" in a nice way when I do not want to do something.					
22. I spend many hours by myself.					
23. I think that I am not as good as others.					
24. I have a plan before I try to solve a problem.					
25. I give up after I try one way of doing something.					

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will perform in non-academic settings. Using the following checklist may help them focus their observations on especially important characteristics.

Insert Figure 2 about here

This checklist is scored in the same way as the individual's with the best answers being marked in the two columns to the right and the poorest in the first column. Analysis by connecting answers with a line shows the youngsters strong and weak points and suggests areas that may need improvement.

Self-monitoring, or the application of metacognition, to social skills, is one means of assessment. Counting certain behaviors in specific situations, keeping a diary or log, using self-reports, self-questioning, analysing video and audio tapes, and assessing performance in role plays are all unstructured methods of self-monitoring social skills suggested by Cartledge and Milburn (1980). These unstructured techniques may be used in place of or in conjunction with the more structured possibilities already discussed. However, according to Cartledge and Milburn (1980) these techniques have limitations. Since the individual is concentrating on certain traits or behaviors, the self-monitoring may cause the behavior to change as it is monitored. Because of this possibility, data from self-monitoring, are best used in combination with other information. It is important to note, however, that skilled self-monitoring "has utility for enhancing social functioning as well as potential for assisting in the generlization of social skills over time." (Cartledge & Milburn, 1980).

The possible cry that all this assessment and analysis is just more paper work is really not valid. All of these instruments, both the published and informal ones, can be administered and/or scored and analysed with the use of a microcomputer. With a relatively simple program, the school, employer, and/or

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Figure 2. Parental Checklist

	Never	Not Usually	Some-time	Most of the Time	All of the Time
1. My child can sit still and listen to a speaker for at least 30 minutes.					
2. My child can follow directions without constant reminders.					
3. My child can give clear instructions.					
4. My child usually does tasks that please adults.					
5. My child looks others in the eye when s/he talks.					
6. My child uses an appropriate tone of voice in conversations--not too loud or soft.					
7. My child can introduce herself/himself to others.					
8. My child will start conversations with others when appropriate.					
9. My child does not dominate conversations or fail to participate in them.					
10. My child uses "please", "thank you", "excuse me", "good bye", etc. when necessary.					
11. My child apologizes in a satisfactory way when necessary.					
12. My child remembers to ask permission when needed.					
13. My child lends items at appropriate times.					
14. My child uses acceptable physical contact with others.					
15. My child keeps his body and clothes neat and clean.					

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	Never	Not usually	Some-time	Most of the time	All of the Time
16. My child smiles and frowns when appropriate.					
17. My child remembers to compliment others in the right situation.					
18. My child can express anger without having a tantrum.					
19. My child is a good sport.					
20. My child is able to walk away from a fight.					
21. My child can say "no" and not be "led on."					
22. My child is a loner most of the time.					
23. My child thinks he is not as good as others in most things, including our family.					
24. My child can walk away from being teased or make an appropriate remark.					
25. My child will make a plan and then try more than one feasible way to solve a problem.					

parent can put the instruments on a computer for administration. If such administration is not desired, responses could be recorded on opscan answer sheets, "read" by a card reader with an analysis being printed for individuals and groups. Therefore, today's technology could be quite helpful in making it possible for the secondary school to make such social skills assessment available for all its LD students who might be about to leave the academic world and want to join the work force. Likewise, employers and personnel officers could easily do such assessments for individuals or groups with relatively little commitment of man hours and resources.

In the quest to help young learning disabled adults improve their social skills, knowledge of their characteristics and assessment of these traits may come through ways such as those described above. However, it is also essential that a model exist for this help, so that it is not ignored and forgotten. Since most identification and assistance for the learning disabled takes place in school settings, the assessment and development of social skills will also need to be done there, at least in the initial stages (Welch, 1983). This assessment and development will probably reap optimum results at the late middle school level and above for three reasons. First, this period is when social skills begin to become really important. Second, the young person at this age is moving out of the egocentric stage and can more easily assume different points of view and see others' feelings. Finally, if intervention is initiated at this level, there is enough time left in the individual's school career to allow for mastery of social skills.

A model such as the following might be used. Responsibilities are outlined for the parents, teacher, counselors and individuals at the late middle school and secondary levels, followed by additional tasks that would be necessary as the young person prepared to move out of the non-academic setting.

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Insert Figure 3 about here

Again, the record-keeping of such a system could easily be managed by a computerized system. Results of assessment and skills mastered could be stored on computer records from year to year within a school. If the child transferred to another local or distant school, print-outs of records would be easily obtained to go along with other cummulative record contents.

In conclusion, several factors must be remembered in discussing the social skills of learning disabled young people. First, as Alley and Deshler have noted (1979), not all LD youngsters lack social skills. Some have superior social skills that they use to compensate for problems in the cognitive and psychomotor areas. Those, however, who have problems seem to share several common characteristics.

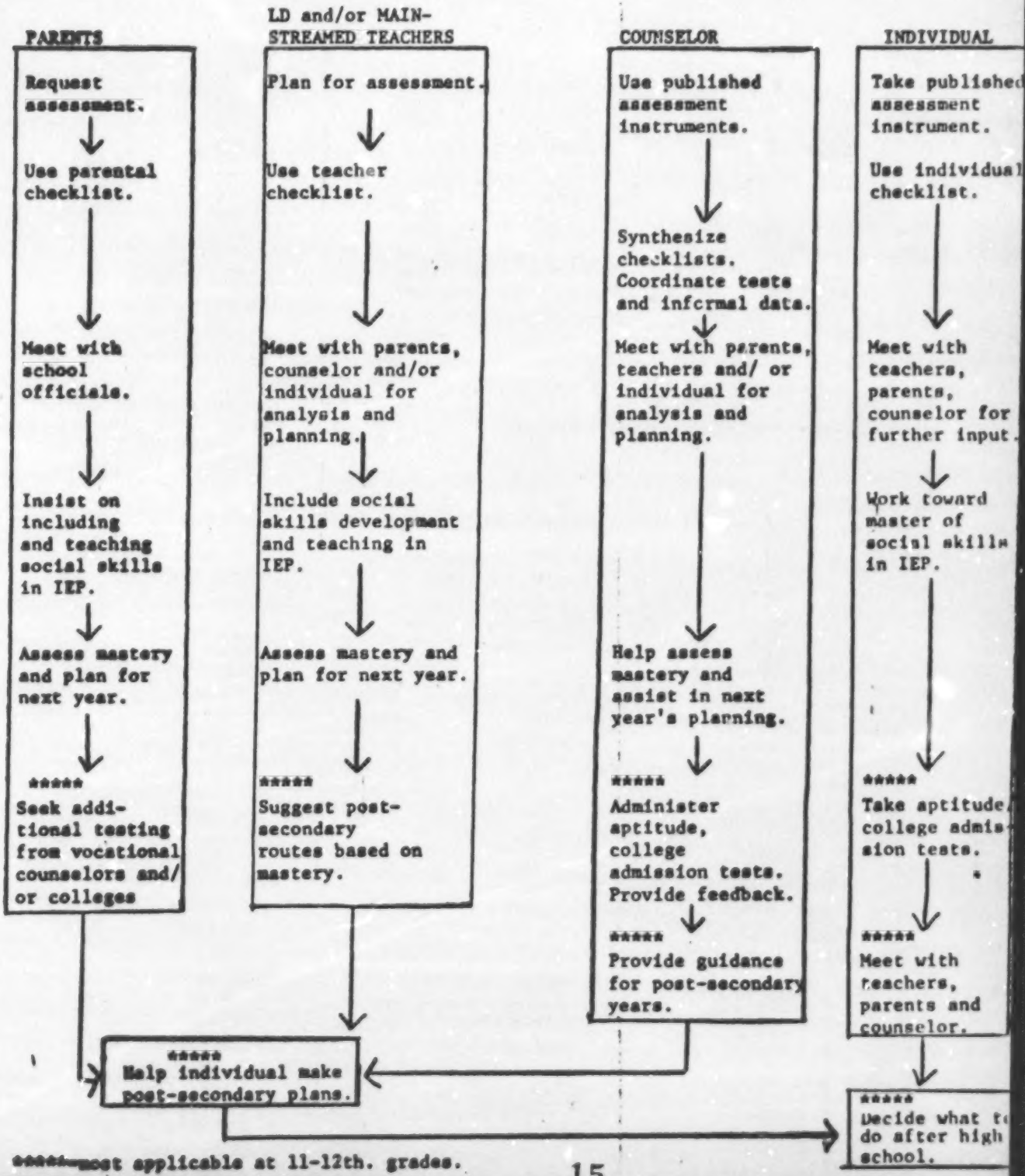
Second, instruments such as those described here will provide gross estimates of those who have problems and areas where those problems are greater. Such evaluations can come from the individual, parents, school personnel, employers, peers and others. A cross-section of opinions can provide maximum help for the young person.

Finally, a comprehensive plan that allows for assessment and teaching of social skills should begin at the late middle school level and continue throughout the youngster's school career. Such a plan must include youngsters, parents, teachers, counselors, and others and must allow for assessment and instruction in a structured, organized way. Such a model limits the possibility, even probability, that the assessment and development of social skills will be ignored.

As Welch (1983) has said, the LD young person only spends an average of

Figure 3. Assessment Model

This model might be used in the late middle grades and secondary grades.


PARENTS
Request assessment.
Use parental checklist.
Meet with school officials.
Insist on including and teaching social skills in IEP.
Assess mastery and plan for next year.
*****
Seek additional testing from vocational counselors and/or colleges
LD and/or MAINSTREAMED TEACHERS
Plan for assessment.
Use teacher checklist.
Meet with parents, counselor and/or individual for analysis and planning.
Include social skills development and teaching in IEP.
Assess mastery and plan for next year.
*****
Suggest post-secondary routes based on mastery.
COUNSELOR
Use published assessment instruments.
Synthesize checklists. Coordinate tests and informal data.
Meet with parents, teachers and/ or individual for analysis and planning.
Help assess mastery and assist in next year's planning.
*****
Administer aptitude, college admission tests. Provide feedback.
*****
Provide guidance for post-secondary years.
INDIVIDUAL
Take published assessment instrument.
Use individual checklist.
Meet with teachers, parents, counselor for further input.
Work toward master of social skills in IEP.
*****
Take aptitude/college admission tests.
*****
Meet with teachers, parents and counselor.
*****
Help individual make post-secondary plans.
*****
Decide what to do after high school.

*****—most applicable at 11-12th. grades.

twenty percent of a lifetime in the academic setting. It is therefore imperative that those skills necessary for surviving in the non-academic setting be mastered. Mastery will come through careful assessment and teaching.

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